



## **English as a Second Language Week celebrations kick off across Ontario**

Toronto, November 10, 2006 – The large and growing role of English as a Second Language (ESL) for adults is being celebrated across Ontario during ESL Week, from November 12-18, 2006.

“ESL education is a vital part of the provincial -- and national -- economy, because it prepares new Canadians to become productive citizens,” says Renate Tilson, executive director, TESL Ontario. “For most newcomers, the ESL instructor is the first contact with Canadian society and he or she becomes their confidant, friend, counselor and more. The individuals who work in this field go beyond the call of duty, and their commitment can be seen in their dedication to ensure the best choices are provided for the newcomer, immigrant or refugee so they can integrate into Canadian society.”

ESL Week has been declared by many communities across Ontario including: Toronto, Oakville, York Region, Norfolk County, Milton, Ajax, Windsor, Clarington, Oshawa, Scugog, North Bay, Callander, Brampton, Niagara Falls, Sault Ste. Marie and Welland. Many of the TESL Ontario affiliates in these centres have planned activities, such as writing and poster contests, in honour of ESL Week.

“We want to acknowledge the work done by ESL instructors who do more than just teach basic, or even advanced, language skills,” adds Tilson. “They also act as cultural interpreters to educate on the context of our society and in knowing the subtleties of our language usage. Even if they understand the grammar thoroughly, new Canadians will be more successful if they know the nuances, which will help them avoid miscues that could cost them job opportunities.”

Says Jing Zhao, a student at Toronto Catholic District School Board's St. William Adult ESL School, who is participating in an ESL course for volunteers with the Toronto East General Hospital: “This program is very helpful for people who want to have a healthcare career. In class, I have learnt a lot of medical terms that are helpful for my future medical study. When I was volunteering in the hospital, I started to know how a Canada hospital works. Because the hospital in [sic] my back home is quite different from here, it is a good chance for a new immigrant to adapt to the new working environment.”

A highlight of ESL Week is the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual TESL Ontario Conference, taking place in Toronto from November 16-18, 2006. It is the largest ESL conference in Canada, and will feature the latest in research and practice in the field of ESL. In attendance will be the Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, The Honourable Mike Colle.

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ESL Week is sponsored by TESL Ontario, the association and certifying body for non-credit adult ESL instructors in Ontario. TESL Ontario represents more than 3,800 ESL professionals working in elementary and secondary schools; colleges and universities; private schools; and LINC and ESL sites across the province. The organization has developed expertise in areas of teacher certification, and professional and curriculum development. For more information, visit [www.teslontario.org](http://www.teslontario.org).

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